

With the House GOP's shining superstar Rep. Paul Ryan now on the presidential ticket, a crowded field is emerging to replace the Wisconsinite as the top Republican on the Budget Committee.

The committee's vice chairman, Rep. Scott Garrett (N.J.), and **Rep. John Campbell (Calif.)**, a senior member of the panel, expressed interest Wednesday in replacing Ryan if GOP presidential nominee Mitt Romney wins in November.

"Yes, that's something I'd be interested in," Campbell said. "The big if, of course, is that Romney and Ryan have to be elected. But it's something I'm taking a look at, something I have interest in."

Garrett, who was a leader of the conservative charge to lower the budget spending level below the number set in the Budget Control Act, said he has his eye on the gavel, too.

"It's certainly interesting. It would be interesting," he said. "That, of course, just popped up in the last few weeks. Right now we're just focusing on what we're doing here."

Adding to a crowded field, however, Republican Study Committee Chairman Jim Jordan (Ohio) is considering also making a play for the gavel, a senior GOP aide said. And the committee is packed with a less senior but extremely ambitious cast of characters, making it hard to predict whom the Republican Steering Committee would choose for the appointed position.

Republican Conference Chairman Jeb Hensarling (Texas) has a slot on the committee, but aides said he is more interested in becoming chairman of the Financial Services Committee, of which he is the vice chairman.

Republican Policy Committee Chairman Tom Price (Ga.), a Budget Committee member, is also thought to have higher ambitions, but most of those are focused for the time being on succeeding

Hensarling as Conference chairman.

Utah Rep. Jason Chaffetz, another ambitious lawmaker, also sits on the panel. He has become a key surrogate for Romney and as a young, charismatic GOP up-and-comer, he could fit the Ryan mold as chairman, if he chooses to make a play for the role.

"I suspect Chaffetz wouldn't mind moving up," said Rep. Mike Simpson (R-Idaho), a senior member of the committee. "I suspect there will be a race."

It's no surprise that the post is gaining so much interest: What was a longtime B-level committee has become a launching pad for many political stars.

Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, Ohio Gov. John Kasich (R) and former Office of Management and Budget Director Jim Nussle all held the gavel at one point.

With the budget sure to be a major battle next year no matter who wins the presidency, the role would allow Members to have an outsized influence on lowering government spending.

Garrett and **Campbell** both said they have been giving thought to what the position would entail.

"You're going to have a President Romney coming in, under that scenario, who has said he wants to balance the budget within a 10-year window. ... I'm all about that," Garrett said. "Whoever takes that position will be in a good spot to work with Romney and Ryan to achieve the Romney objective of balancing it far sooner than anything we've wanted to pass before."

Campbell said the role, in his eyes, would be picking up where Ryan leaves off.

"Paul Ryan has started a bunch of initiatives in the Budget Committee which have not been finished. The job, to me, would then be to finish what Paul Ryan started," he said.

One thing is clear, though. Whoever takes the committee helm will have big shoes to fill.

"It'd be a tough shadow to live in. Whoever gets it is going to have to follow Paul Ryan. Good luck," said Rep. James Lankford (R-Okla.), a committee member.

Indeed, staffers say none of the contenders measure up to the charismatic conservative celebrity that Ryan has become.

Though Garrett has the know-how to herald a budget and seems to be the favorite, staffers said the soft-spoken and unassuming Member would hardly be the front-and-center personality that Ryan is.

But one leadership aide noted that having a prominent committee chairman would be less necessary if Ryan is leading the charge from the White House.

Still, Garrett has occasionally been a thorn in GOP leaders' side, pushing for a budget lower than \$1 trillion when Speaker John Boehner (Ohio) preferred a higher number.

"You've got to be somebody who is willing to pass serious budgets that work. The things they were asking for weren't viable," a GOP aide said.